



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

Floor Statement Transcript

Rep. John Peterson

Re-authorization of the Economic Development Administration

HR 2535

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LaTourette) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. Norton) for their good work on the re-authorization of EDA. I, as the co-chairman of the Congressional Rural Caucus, rise today in strong support of this re-authorization for the Economic Development Administration. The programs under the EDA are tremendously vital to rural areas. Without Federal economic development investment in rural economies, many of these communities would lack the resources to attract the next generation of manufacturing jobs and they would wither and dry up.

The re-authorization passed in the 105th Congress focused these programs toward serving the most needy, and I am pleased this re-authorization will continue to build upon those achievements. I have seen firsthand how the past re-authorization has focused Federal dollars to target communities that lack the resources.

I want to give you a few examples. When Knox Glass closed in Clarion County, it was EDA who stepped to the plate with a grant that allowed them to build a new industrial park there on (Interstate) 80 and replace many of those jobs. When Franklin Steel closed, it was an EDA grant that allowed Franklin Industries to reopen that factory and have several hundred people working there. When Kendall Refining closed in McKean County, and now we reopened American Refineries, it was an EDA grant that allowed that to happen. When the Stackpole Corporation closed and thousands of jobs left Elk County in Pennsylvania, it was an EDA grant through the North Central Planning Commission that now has 200 to 300 people working in different companies throughout that complex. And when Cyclops Steel Plant closed 5 miles from my home and 1,000 good jobs went down the drain, it was an EDA grant that allowed that facility to be taken over by a local development agency, and there are several hundred jobs and about 20 companies providing employment there today.

Do we need it in the future? Yes, we do. In my 16-county rural district in Pennsylvania, we have lost 17,000 manufacturing jobs in the years 2001 and 2002. So I stand here today saying we need an expanded EDA. We need an EDA with more money, with a bigger budget. And I am here today on behalf of the re-authorization of this agency because their structure allows them to go into a rural community that has been devastated by losing their major employer and give that grant that is the glue that will put an economic opportunity back in those communities.

Rural America is in trouble. We need a bigger, stronger EDA to help us. They have an agency with a good track record. I want to commend Secretary David Sampson for his strong leadership there, and I want to commend the committee for their good work in bringing forth this re-authorization.